

MURRUMBIDGEE

ISSUE 23 WINTER 2023

MATTERS

MAGAZINE

FEATURE:

OUR MIDWIVES
CHANGING
THE WORLD

IN FOCUS:
LHAC FORUM

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ABOUT US

Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) provides a range of public health services to the Riverina and Murray regions of NSW, Australia.

We provide services across a geographic area of about 125,561 square kilometres to a population of more than 240,700 residents. People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage make up four per cent of the population.

As the largest employer in the region, with more than 3,800 healthcare staff working across 33 hospitals and 12 primary health care centres, we are supported by hundreds of volunteers who make an invaluable contribution to enriching the lives of people in our care.

Our services are provided through:

- 1 Rural Referral Hospital
- 1 Base Hospital
- 8 District Health Services
- 5 Community Hospitals
- 16 Multipurpose Services
- 2 Mercy Care Public Hospitals
- 12 Community Health Posts
- 1 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service

PUBLICATION

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land covering MLHD and remind people that we live and work on Aboriginal land.

Welcome to the 23rd issue of Murrumbidgee Matters Magazine.

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FRONT COVER

Frosty morning in Gundagai

CONTACT US

EDITORIAL

Please submit your news stories to:
E: MLHD-News@health.nsw.gov.au

ADVERTISING

Setchen Brimson
Executive Services Manager- Communications
T: 02 5943 2010
E: setchen.brimson@health.nsw.gov.au

MURRUMBIDGEE LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT
Level 1, 193-195 Morgan Street
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
E: MLHD-FeedBack@health.nsw.gov.au
www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

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OUR VISION

Exceptional rural healthcare
Healthier together
Care tailored to people's needs



Gundagai plays host to Health Forum

On a cold and frosty spring morning in May, volunteers descended on the small country town of Gundagai, preparing to focus their energy on how the Murrumbidgee can attract, recruit and retain health professionals to our region.

Around 80 delegates from across the region attended the 2023 May LHAC Forum, hosted by the Gundagai Local Health Advisory Committee (LHAC). The forum is held twice each year for LHAC members to come together to discuss health issues and ideas, and share their initiatives with health service leaders from the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) and the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN).

The theme for the May LHAC forum was "Growing Our Own" and focussed on generating ideas on how MLHD and MPHN can work together with communities to promote health careers and attract and retain health workforce to the Murrumbidgee region. The forum focussed on training pathways and sharing ideas to supporting the health workforce and improve health outcomes in regional communities.

Forum host Gundagai LHAC took the opportunity to showcase the Health Literacy projects they had been working on throughout the year.

A highlight for the event was hearing from key note speaker Dr Maggie-Kate Minogue who is a graduate of the Rural Generalist Training Pathway first piloted in Gundagai. The 'Murrumbidgee Model' has been lauded a success and rolled out nationwide. The model provides a tailored, co-ordinated pathway for doctors wanted to become Rural Generalists. Maggie-Kate

joined Gundagai Medical Centre to complete her rural practice training, and will also work in the Gundagai Multipurpose Service's emergency department as a visiting medical officer (VMO) under the guidance of Dr Maya Eamus.

LHAC members were provided with updates from the Wiradjuri community, MLHD and MPHN, General Practitioners, Nurses, Allied Health, representatives from across the public and private sector in health, education (TAFE), and workforce.

The forum provided an opportunity for LHAC members to share ideas and explore how we can "Grow Our Own" with a series of roundtable discussions examining the barriers and enablers to growing a sustainable workforce in the Murrumbidgee.

A team from the Regional Health Division attended the Forum, providing updates of the work being undertaken by the Division which was developed following the Inquiry into Rural, Regional and Remote Healthcare. The Regional Health Division supports the NSW Government's commitment to improving health outcomes and access to health services for people living in regional, rural and remote NSW.

"It is a privilege to be part of the LHAC," commented Lockhart LHAC Chair Frances Day OAM. "LHAC members come from all walks of life and have varying interests, but what unites them is that they are strong and vocal advocates who have their community's best interest at heart."



"At the Forum, a new understanding was developed of the shared challenges across the Murrumbidgee region and beyond, resulting in a real opportunity to contribute to developing outcomes and solutions," Ms Day said.

"Local Health Advisory Committee members are passionate about ensuring the best possible health outcomes for their communities," said Community Engagement Manager Setchen Brimson. "Their opinions, concerns and ideas about what matters most to local people contributes enormously to health service planning and sustainability."

"We have had many discussions over the past year about workforce challenges and it was a fantastic opportunity at this forum to harness ideas about how we can nurture our own talent and discuss opportunities for showcasing our region as a great place to live, work and play."

The 2023 May LHAC Forum followed a series of Planning and Priority Setting workshops held earlier this year with each committee, identifying key project areas and ideas for a health focus.

Each LHAC reviewed the health profiles for their local community using data sources provided by the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network, and this helped guide discussion around some of the critical health conditions and risk factors impacting people in our community.

LHACs, together with their local knowledge and understanding of their community needs, were able to determine key priority areas to focus on to improve the health and wellbeing of people in their local areas. ■

LHAC PRIORITY AREAS

Key themes from the planning sessions include:

- Improving health literacy
- Improving participation rates for cancer screening
- Ageing Population - improved awareness of and access to services
- Mental Health- early diagnoses, intervention and prevention
Promoting Healthy Lifestyle Choices
- Workforce recruitment and retention strategies
- Tackling chronic disease and lifting health outcomes
- Virtual Care – raise awareness around how community can better access services through use of virtual care

Photos: LHAC members from across the District at the 2023 May LHAC Forum in Gundagai (10-11 May 2023)



To find out more about how you can join your Local Health Advisory Committee visit www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/getinvolved



CELEBRATING MIDWIVES



Cathrine Wade Registered Nurse and Midwife Deniliquin Hospital

Cathrine Wade, Registered Nurse and Midwife is the Clinical Midwifery Educator and Indigenous Liaison Midwife at Deniliquin Hospital.

Her role as a clinical midwife educator sees her mentor and support other midwives at Deniliquin Hospital.

“Primarily it is about ensuring our midwives and nurses have not only the latest resources and training available, but also a supportive person available to mentor them in their journey as a health professional,” Cathrine said.

“I feel that as women we sometimes forget to value that and support each other, and my role involves offering that advice, recognition and mentorship.

Cathrine is passionate about delivering exceptional patient care to vulnerable women who live and work in more regional areas.

She feels it is important to share the experience she has gained over her 45 year career in nursing and midwifery, and in particular as a practicing caseload midwife over the past 10 years.

“A caseload midwife manages their own clients, with the backing of a hospital and Obstetric supervision.

“You care for woman from their very first appointment, all the way through their pregnancy, to birthing their babies.

“It is wonderful because the woman has opportunity to engage and liaise directly with the midwife and the approach is one more about partnerships.

“We are focused on delivering patient focused care and providing women with informed choices about their birthing journey.

“There is a continuity of care for the mother and baby and so different to working on a ward, and having designated shifts,” Cathrine explains.

Cath describes herself as an explorer and loves to “jump in her car and just drive somewhere”.

“I have found myself managing a busy hospital ward in the UK, accidentally nursing in Tassie for six years instead of my planned 12 months, and experiencing the most rewarding and beautiful work in Cape York, assisting Australia’s First Nations people,” Cath said.

“I am always very busy and am never bored, when I am not exploring new places and arts and crafts, you can find me curled up with a good book.

“I am from a large family and have two grown children who I would describe as beautiful humans, and we have always had the philosophy that things will always work out exactly as they are supposed to,” Cathrine said.

Cathrine thinks that midwifery offers special opportunities to support future generations.

“One of the most rewarding things is being with women. As the Indigenous Liaison midwife, I feel it is particularly important. A woman is central to raising the next generation, and it because of her that we are here.

“I have made some lifelong friends along the way, all over the country and overseas, but now that I have settled in Deniliquin, I really have a soft spot for the people here.

“I love smaller rural hospitals and I love the community in Deniliquin. I encourage all nurses to get out of the city hospitals and spend some quality time working in a more rural setting. It is so vastly different to working in the bigger hospitals where you sometimes get lost.

“There is a kindness here, a sense of community and the people are so caring and friendly.

“The team at Deni hospital are the reason why I have chosen to stay here. They are women supporting women and they have the biggest hearts.”

Leselle Herman Registered Midwife Leeton Hospital

Leselle Herman is an experienced Registered Midwife with a passion for providing positive birthing experiences for the women and families she supports. Leselle made the move to Leeton earlier this year to join the Leeton Midwifery Group Practice.

Although Leselle is set on being a midwife for life, she didn't always see herself working with people.

"Back in high school I was going to be a zoologist, because I love animals," Leselle said.

"Then I got jobs at the newsagent and pub and realised I actually quite liked working with people. I went to a careers expo, and at the time we were studying reproduction in biology so I think it all just converged and I thought midwifery sounded like a great idea. And it turned out that it was!"

Leselle discovered the challenge and reward of working in a rural hospital very early on in her career.

"I grew up in Queensland and studied a dual degree, Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Midwifery at the University of Queensland. My training was all done in big, busy tertiary hospitals, so when I graduated I decided to go to the country and try something different for a bit of a challenge. I ended up in regional Victoria, in a hospital much smaller than Leeton.

"It was a great experience. You have to know what you're doing and be confident to work more autonomously, without huge amounts of physical support around you, and be ready to build up and use your emergency skills.

"I moved around a bit after that, to NSW, back to Queensland, and back to NSW again. I came to Leeton from Mudgee, so a similar sized town but a slightly bigger hospital, and further away from its major referral hospitals."

It was the desire to deliver the type of care she was most passionate about that prompted Leselle's move to Leeton.

"I was drawn to the role in Leeton because of the Midwifery Group Practice (MGP). I'm very passionate about the MGP model of care and I'd just reached that point in my career where I wanted



to be able to work in a model that allows me to provide the kind of care I want to provide, for the women I support.

"Continuity of care and having a known midwife, or team of midwives, to look after women in pregnancy, there's really, really strong evidence to show that that it leads to reduced intervention and reduces the rate of preterm birth. It also reduces the risk of women and families losing their babies.

"Midwifery-led models of care can be challenging to implement, despite the mountains of evidence based research. Not all communities are fortunate enough to have access to midwifery-led care so I am just very excited to be in a community that does. Leeton is very lucky."

Leselle aims to empower and educate women, and make them feel informed and supported and in control of their birth choices.

"Women are the expert of their own body, and I trust them to make decisions. I'm here to help and guide, and to support and advocate for them if things don't go to plan.

"For the majority of women, pregnancy and birth is a normal physiological process. As a midwife I empower women to trust their body. Being pregnant and birthing and feeding our babies, our bodies are designed to do that. It's just a normal life event for our bodies.

"To be there and watch that process, it's a privilege."

Leselle is settling in well in Leeton and enjoying the chance to explore between shifts.

"Leeton is a beautiful town, everyone is so friendly and welcoming. I grew up by the beach and love the outdoors so I've been checking out some spots to jump into the river for a swim and go for bushwalks and that sort of thing.

"Another thing I love to do is circus aerials- silks and lyra and that sort of thing. So that's a bit of fun!

"I'm hoping to get across to Wagga to join a group there. It's a really fun way to exercise and the people that do it create these communities that are so supportive, and all about celebrating everyone for their skills and journey, whatever stage they're at. It's creative and physically taxing, and using your body that way gives you a real sense of accomplishment when you achieve a new goal.

"I did a lot of competitive sport when I was younger so it's been really healthy for me to do something that is just about challenging myself, I don't have to be the best."

Leeton's Midwifery Group Practice now has a team of four permanent midwives, ready to guide and support you through your pregnancy, birth and beyond.

"If you're pregnant or planning a pregnancy you don't need a referral to come and see us – just give us a call on 5943 2148 and make a time to come in and meet us. There's no obligation, we can chat about what we can offer you and what options there are, and you can decide what suits you. You're the expert in your own body, we're just here to support you and provide the care that works for you." ■

A Country Change



*Paula Olsen
Registered Midwife
Tumut Hospital*

From Canadian Alps to the Snowy Valleys

Many things in Paula Olsen's life bring her joy.

The move from Canada to Australia is one, the love of her husband and family another, but there is something extra special about her role as a midwife at Tumut Health Service that keeps the fire burning in her soul.

"Seeing the women, babies and families in my community thrive because of the care we are able to deliver in our town, is a special kind of satisfying," Paula said.

"When you find that thing which brings you joy, you tend to stick with it."

Living in Tumut for a little over 10 years, Paula becomes emotional when she ponders what she holds dear about her community.

"The people here are so resilient, they are salt of the earth. The Tumut community has the most amazing spirit, and people here have each other's backs in really difficult circumstances."

Paula is passionate in supporting the delivery of quality health services, and in particular maternity services, to the people in her town, and identifies that access to local and appropriate services is crucial.

Midwives offer shared care with GP obstetricians in the Tumut District. The midwives work in partnership with the local GP to provide education, information and support during the antenatal, birthing and postnatal periods.

"Access to appropriate maternity services for the women in our regional communities is a really big deal, it is extremely important," Paula said.

As such Paula is currently involved in the re-establishment of a community-based midwifery service for the people who reside in and around Tumut.

"We have moved away from having postnatal mothers stay in hospital for an extended period. Now many mums are going home within a couple of days or hours post birth, so we need to be flexible around the delivery of our services.

"Being able to offer maternity services both in a hospital setting as well as in the

community setting gives women a safe space to transition home.

Paula explains that better patient outcomes happen when mothers feel supported and secure and have the confidence to succeed in what can be the biggest transition of their life.

"We have that relationship. We are aware of the context of each woman's experience, how the pregnancy has progressed throughout the term.

"Our service is the buffer for these mums, to be able to openly talk with someone they know about self-care in the lead up to and following the birth, breastfeeding, how to minimise risks of depression and anxiety, but above all to know we are there and that they are not alone."

From prenatal clinics and classes to regular check-ups, follow-up clinics, or during a home visit, midwives within regional areas are the familiar voice who are able to give personal and appropriate care to birthing mothers.

"We are involved in the nitty gritty of our birthing mothers' journeys," Paula said.

"We also work very closely with the child and family health team in the weeks following birth, to ensure our mums are feeling supported, happy and safe and have the smoothest transition possible.

"We find that in the country, as a general rule, women are birthing at an earlier age than women in the city. It is just so important that we can educate and offer appropriate support and care for our mums."

The term Patient Centred Care has extra special meaning for Paula.

"For me, I am privileged to work with women and their families, in their own space, where they are the ones taking you on their journey with them.

"We are walking alongside our mums, holding their hand, sharing such special moments.

"We see them transition in welcoming a baby into their lives, becoming a mum, extending their family, the most special of moments.

"As midwives we are invited to support our new mums, see them move into the driver's seat, see the confidence develop and they realise 'you know- I think I've got this!'"

Paula encourages other midwives to consider moving to regional towns like Tumut and immerse themselves in the opportunities to grow their skills and to feel a part of something special.

"You get to slow down a little bit, to breathe and to do work that builds great relationships with your birthing mums, and this leads to better quality care overall and better patient experiences.

"Sometimes in larger metro hospitals, as a midwife you are birthing in a very busy environment- you have to move onto the next mum in labour.

"But in Tumut, we have the opportunity to really deliver quality care with the mums within our community. We become a part of their journey throughout their pregnancy, and in the weeks that follow. That is precious. We are always on the lookout for more midwives- and it is an opportunity for health professionals to do work that is extremely rewarding.

"Our facility at Tumut is new and we have a wonderful new birthing suite that is world class.

"I love coming to work, being known and knowing people. You have a sense that the work you are doing is that little bit more personal, these people are a part of my community, my life- and it just makes you feel that you are making big differences.

"Our team here at Tumut Health Service is supportive, resilient and beautiful. We really do help each other achieve the best outcomes for our patients, it is our focus," Paula said.

"And if the thought of working in such a wonderful environment, amongst such a amazing community is not quite enough, just imagine the beautiful countryside and a life with less stress," Paula said.

"I love the hills, the green, the fresh air, and I especially love that parking is a breeze and that it only takes a couple of minutes to get to work! ■

TEAM TEMORA - MIDWIFERY LED MODEL OF CARE

Madison Miller Registered Nurse and Midwife Temora Health Service

Temora Midwife Madison Miller cherishes the important moments.

The Registered Nurse and Midwife loves helping women through what she feels is one of the most important moments in their life.

“Being present for such an important and special moment is extremely rewarding,” Madison said.

Madison enjoys working in Temora because she can utilise all her skills.

“A rural setting affords me the opportunity to use a wide range of skills and allows me to work across different

areas of health. No two days are the same and we really are able to spend quality time with our patients.

“I find that the women we work with really do appreciate our time and the effort we show when caring for them,” Madison said.

When Madison is not busy delivering babies, she enjoys her other favourite pastime.

“I enjoy walks around the countryside and drawing inspiration from nature, and I love to dabble in watercolour painting.”



Pauline Kelly Registered Midwife Temora Health Service

Pauline Kelly is registered midwife who worked in a busy Sydney hospital for over 40 years, before relocating to Temora.

“It has been a welcome joy to be here and experience a different pace in my working life.

“I am thankful to have more time to support women and their families during such an important time. I feel more able to apply my knowledge and experience to fully support women, rather than feeling rushed.

“The staff midwives at Temora Health Service have been extremely welcoming, and my transition to living and working in Temora has been a very comfortable one.”

Pauline feels privileged to participate in the birthing journey for women in the community of Temora.

“I prefer to say we are working alongside women and their families, supporting them through their pregnancy, birth and parenting journeys.

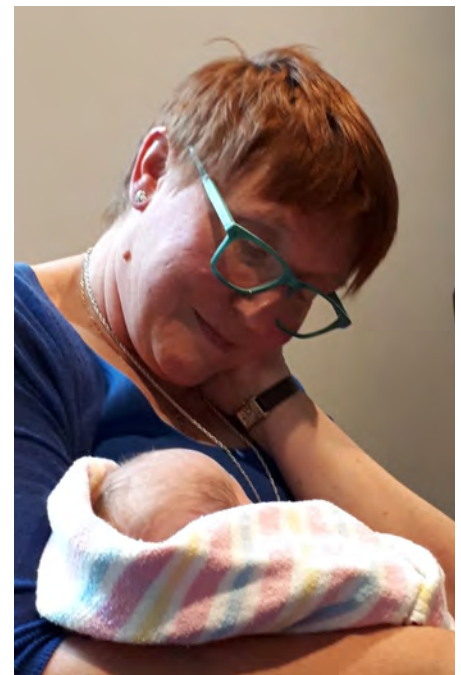
“We are focused on providing women with balanced information so they can make choices that suit them as individuals and as part of a family.

“I have a sincere heart for helping women through the often hidden and unspoken challenges and unexpected parts of pregnancy, birth and parenting.

“Even though the size of the town is small in comparison to Sydney, the community in Temora has been very friendly, welcoming and really provides most of the services and facilities that make our family’s lives very comfortable and enjoyable.

“The only thing I do miss are a wider choice of cultural foods and restaurants, but I am sure that as more people move to the friendliest town in NSW, these extra things will emerge.”

And Pauline feels confident about that as she explains, “Of the 14 members in my immediate family, 10 of them accompanied me in our tree change to Temora.



“We currently all live in one very noisy, and chaotic home, while our new home is built, but we don’t mind.

“The quality of life here has truly enriched our lives and we have been very blessed to have found Temora.”

Rebecca Stimson Clinical Midwifery Educator Temora Health Service

Rebecca Stimson is a Registered Nurse (RN) and Midwife at Temora Hospital.

"I love the small country community here and looking after women and their babies," Rebecca said.

Over the past 12 years Rebecca has worked in a variety of roles, and most recently as the Clinical Midwifery Educator for Temora Health Service, but still works in a clinical capacity as a midwife.

"It is wonderful to see first-hand the positive impacts we can make in providing women centred care to birthing mothers in our local community," Rebecca said.

"There is a bit of a misconception in our area that birthing mothers do not have proper access to maternity services in our smaller towns.

"I want to assure our community that we a capable team of 10 midwives who are dedicated to providing quality maternity services to the birthing mothers in our region.

"For many years we have used a grow your own approach to our team, and are excited to welcome a student midwife to complete their midwifery degree with us next year.

"Many of our midwives are local women who have completed midwifery training here at Temora. These dedicated women are motivated to stay here, to live and work within our beautiful community," Rebecca said.

Rebecca feels that midwives are highly specialised and have the opportunity to develop a long-lasting relationship that extends from prenatal, to after the birth of the baby.

"As midwives we engage and collaborate with so many people including GPs, obstetricians and paediatricians to provide care throughout the antenatal, birth and postnatal experience of the patient.

"However, what is the most important thing for us, is the relationship and trust we build with our birthing mothers and their families.



Rebecca also wants to remind the community about the importance of reaching out and asking for help if you need it.

"Being pregnant or becoming a new parent can be both exciting and daunting," Rebecca said.

"We encourage people to be open about the changes and feelings they have.

"If the ups and downs develop into something more serious, we are there to encourage people to get more help.

"Whether it is in the lead up to birthing, or in the weeks that follow, midwives offer sound clinical advice, a friendly face to confide in or some reassurance, it is all part of our journey together."

To find out more about Temora Hospital Maternity Services call 02 6980 0200. ■

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about the infinite opportunities with nursing and midwifery at MLHD, find your next job here:

<https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/nursing-midwifery-careers>



*Wagga Wagga Base Hospital Midwives,
Phibian Koskei and Mavis Gaff-Smith*

Our midwives- changing the world

Mavis Gaff-Smith reminisces over a small photo of her as a child, dressing a wound on her baby brother's thumb.

"I suppose nursing has always been in me. I was raised on a farm and involved in caring for the injured and sick animals, delivering baby lambs and the like, and nurses are in our family. It was natural progression," Mavis said.

Mavis officially began her nursing career 58 years ago and is still going strong, dividing her time between her employment at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (WWBH) and volunteering overseas.

Working across both metropolitan and regional hospitals in Victoria and NSW, Mavis relocated to WWBH in 1988 to be close to her elderly parents, and 'to help see them safely through life and 35 years on, Mavis is still enjoying her role.

"My initial training was in the hospital setting, and I was happy to also formally train at university, which began a 13 year

journey of study, including a PhD.

"Back then I worked part time and travelled 860 km per week to Wollongong, to get it all done, but it was all worth it," Mavis tells us.

"I love being a part of the team at Wagga Base Hospital. We are family here, very close and if anything happens among us, we all rally around each other."

Mavis exclusively works night-duty and loves empowering mothers at what she feels can be a very uncertain time.

"Babies are often unsettled at night-time, and new mums are sometimes very tired and unsure. I love being able to help and offer that care.

"For me it is mothering the mothers, they need mothering sometimes," Mavis smiles.

As a registered nurse and midwife, Mavis has made a career out of sharing her skills and knowledge with health professionals, students and patients

worldwide, delivering babies all over the world, including Africa, Jamaica, Mexico, Nepal, Zambia and India, and Mother Theresa in Calcutta working with dying and destitute women.

"The conditions are so different over there, with nurses working very long shifts and having limited remuneration, supplies and resources. We can forget just how lucky we are here," Mavis reminds us.

"It is a real eye opener."

Mavis completed a PhD in 1999, focusing on factors affecting teenage pregnancy and early motherhood.

"We discovered that many teenage pregnancies involve partners who are much older, and this is a trend that is replicated worldwide," Mavis said.

"My findings have really driven me to try and make a difference in any way that I can and demonstrates just how important it is to prioritise the education and empowerment of young women and girls," Mavis said.



Phibian Koskei was a practicing nutritionist in Kenya, before relocating with her husband to Australia.

The family moved to Wagga in 2007 where an experience at work inspired her to upskill and study Nursing and Midwifery.

"I was working as an interpreter for emergency services, helping a woman from my home country who was unable to speak English, in late stage labour and isolated at home with a two-year-old child. I was the voice on the phone, relaying instructions from the bit by bit so her baby could be safely delivered at home."

Phibian recalls, "It was really intense because she was so vulnerable and alone, and I was the voice of reassurance to help her baby be delivered safely. I felt honoured to be there for her at such an important and special milestone in that woman's life.

"There are many women from my country here, who need support, and I felt my skills as a nutritionist, coupled with a nursing and midwifery degree would be a unique way to help overcome the language barriers for those seeking health services at such an important time," Phibian said.

"My knowledge in nutrition fits perfectly with nursing and midwifery, and I am able to use that every day in my practice, to help advise pregnant mothers about good nutrition.

When Phibian started working at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, she heard there was a midwife on the team who loved Africa and had travelled and practiced nursing in Kenya.

"From the minute I met Mavis, we connected over our love for Africa and our need to help others and of course we became lifelong friends.

"We often spoke about volunteering together in Africa and then finally after COVID travel restrictions eased we decided that there was no time like the present.... and within four weeks of deciding to do it we were on the plane!" Phibian said.

Mavis and Phibian decided to volunteer their time in the public health sector in Kenya, focusing on their common interest in the education and empowerment of girls and the impact of teenage pregnancy.

"We were privileged to visit Narok and Bomet County where there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy. The majority of Narok residents are the Maasai, and well known for maintaining their traditional way of living, where women do majority of the house chores including building their traditional houses known as Manyattas, gather the food, cook, clean, look after the family, and the opportunity to attend school can often be overlooked.

"As a result there are a large number of teenage pregnancies and marriages each year, so I felt passionate about speaking to these girls about the benefits of gaining an education to become independent, and helping to make a change in their lives.

"We know as health providers, that education is a powerful thing, and to educate a girl, you help to change a family, and eventually a village, and hopefully the world, Phibian said.

"There seems to have been some good changes over the years, and I see more women with qualifications, and more midwives who practice in the villages



with very successful outcomes. It is extraordinary when you consider they have little to no access to medical interventions and facilities.

Back home in Wagga, Phibian and Mavis contemplate their careers over their combined 40 years of Midwifery practice.

"The number doesn't matter to us. What matters is the care we have given and the education and opportunity we have offered to young women universally.

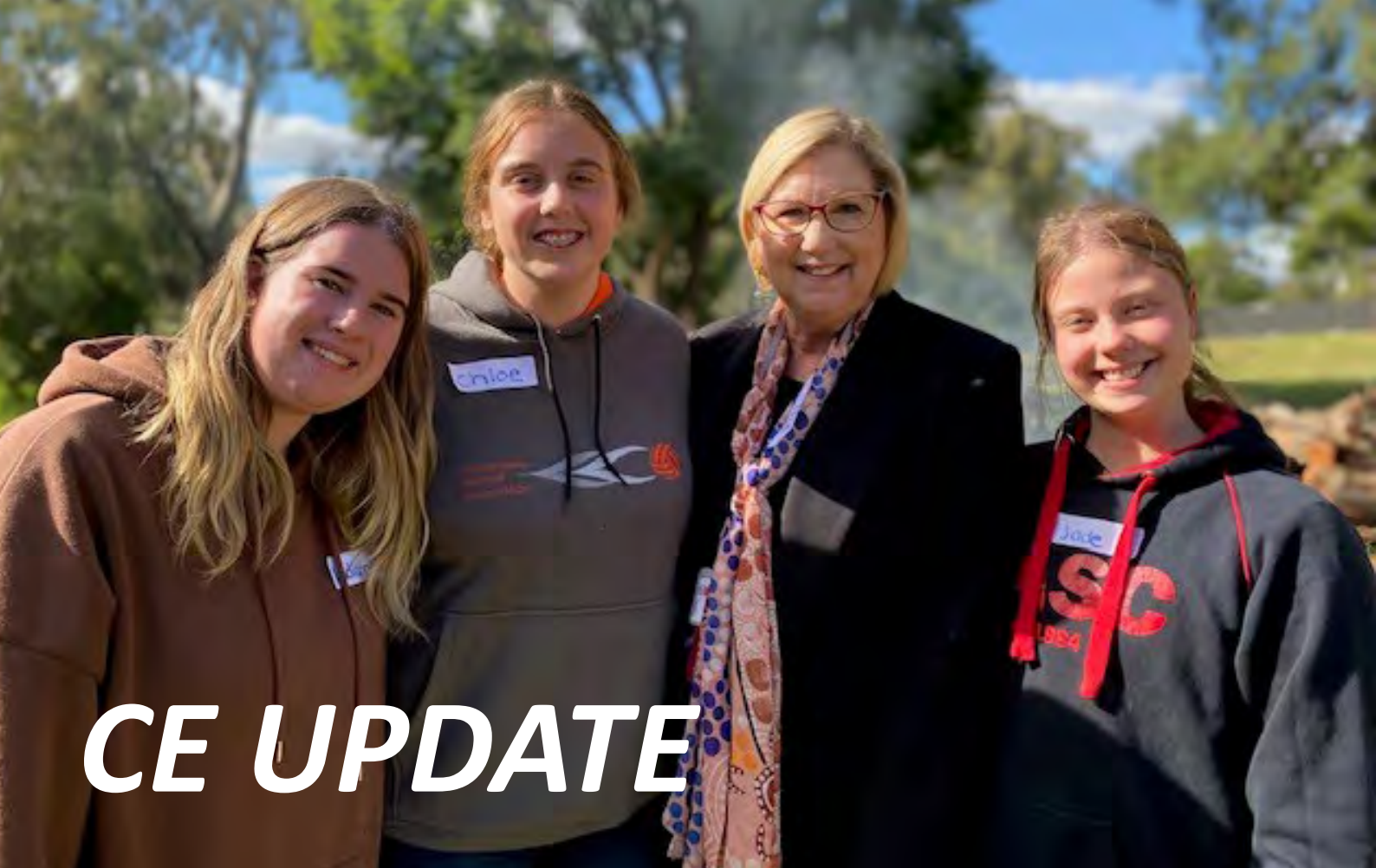
"We are very happy in our roles, with a supportive and approachable manager and team. I would not want to work anywhere else," Mavis said.

"I hear good feedback every day in my work from mothers who have completed their birthing journey with us, and it brings me so much joy," Phibian said.

"Just the other day a patient was able to relay the difference she felt in having her second child here, compared to her experience in the city. She was happy with the continuity of care, not having to keep repeating herself to a different person each time, having a familiar midwife who was able to relate to her on a more personal level.

"It is about building those relationships on a more personal level, building that trust," Mavis said.

"No matter if it is in a volunteer role somewhere overseas, or right here at home, for us it is about being fully present to help to educate, support and empower the women who we come to know so well." ■



CE UPDATE

Jill Ludford Chief Executive

LOCALLY LED REFORM

Small communities in the Murrumbidgee are benefitting from an outreach program that is taking cardiac services to them. Delivered by the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, the Outreach Heart Failure Diagnostic Clinic ensures patients who are identified as being at elevated risk, or showing symptoms, of heart failure have timely access to screening and assessment.

They are also able to access diagnostics including echocardiography, which is an ultrasound of the heart, with no cost to the patient. The early detection, assessment and management of heart failure aims to optimise heart failure management within the community. Our goal is to improve quality of life for our patients, and reduce preventable emergency department presentations and hospital admissions.

Anitha Stanley, a Transitional Nurse Practitioner-Heart Failure with the MLHD's Chronic Respiratory and Heart Failure Team, is excited to be part of the team that recently held a two-day outreach clinic in Hay. This was the first time the Outreach Heart Failure Diagnostic Clinic had been held in Hay. The team has conducted clinics so far at West Wyalong, Temora and now Hay. The next clinic is scheduled for Lake Cargelligo.

Our patients are not only receiving comprehensive clinical assessments and echocardiography, but they are also linked in with other services. It's a patient-centred approach to health care, and timely escalation for appropriate medical and surgical management.

LHAC FORUM

Our Local Health Advisory Committees (LHACs) met in Gundagai for their biannual forum in May. The theme "Growing our Own" was an opportunity to look closely at a number of strategies we have adopted to develop our own workforce. LHAC representatives heard from Maggie-Kate Minogue, one of the first trainees to complete the Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway - now known as the "Murrumbidgee Model" - being rolled out Australia wide.

Other pathways into health careers were also discussed, including school based traineeships which enables high-school students the opportunity to pursue a traineeship in a variety of health areas whilst completing their HSC.

ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE FORUM

I had the privilege of participating in our workforce forum recently in Narrandera. Held for the first time in 2019, the Forum provides an opportunity for our Aboriginal staff to stay connected, as well as the opportunity for any new staff to connect across the teams, strengthen their own professional development and contribute to the focus areas of the Aboriginal Workforce Strategy.

Our workforce is distributed across such a wide-spread area, including traditional lands of the Wiradjuri, Wamba Wamba/Wemba Wemba, Perrepa Perrepa, Yorta Yorta, Nari Nari and Muthi Muthi nations.

The forum provides a respectful culturally safe space for our Aboriginal workforce to connect, engage and develop. A great deal of valuable insight and feedback has come from the forum, which will help us to continue providing the best possible workplace for our staff.

2023 VOLUNTEER WEEK - the Change Makers

We celebrated with our volunteers in May and were able share many activities across the district to acknowledge the great work that our many volunteers do each and every day across the District

When I think about the theme of this year's Volunteer Week, I can't help but be inspired about the change our many volunteers make to the quality of life of people in our communities.

In all of MLHD facilities, every day we have a host of volunteers supporting people, from our hospital volunteers who assist with wayfinding support, run a snack trolley and help with small tasks in the wards, to our pastoral care volunteers, our activity leaders who guide people through various exercises like tai chi and aqua therapy, to our volunteers who provide social supports to patients with practical activities like painting nails, hand massage or reading, and many others.

I'd especially like to say a huge thank you to the members of our Local Health Advisory Committees who work hard to be a voice for their communities. People like Wagga Wagga LHAC chair, Garth Hungerford, are working to make a difference.

Garth, (pictured right) was named as the NSW Health Volunteer of the Year at the NSW Health Awards 2022. You can read more about Garth's community advocacy here: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/innovation/2022awards/Pages/garth-volunteer-award-2022.aspx>

CONGRATULATIONS!

I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations to all the finalists in our 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards. 84 nominations were received across nine team award categories and four individual award categories, which have now been narrowed down to just a few finalists in each category. We've seen such a diversity and high quality in the nominations this year, the judging panels really have had a tough time determining the top three in each category. Keep an eye out in our next edition of Murrumbidgee Matters Magazine for full details on our winners!

Jill Ludford
Chief Executive



It's that time of year again! Getting our flu vaccinations ahead of the winter season.



At the 2023 LHAC Forum with Gundagai's Des Manton, Henty's Mick Broughan and Adelong's Jean Roche.



Congratulating Wagga Wagga LHAC Chair Garth Hungerford on winning the 2022 NSW Health Volunteer of the Year Award.



At the Aboriginal Workforce Forum in Narrandera

2023

MLHD EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

The finalists for the 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards have been announced.

There were 84 nominations received across nine team award categories and four individual award categories, which have now been narrowed down to just a few finalists in each category.

MLHD Chief Executive Jill Ludford said the response was pleasing.

"We've seen such a diversity and high quality in the nominations this year, the judging panels really have had a tough time determining the top three in each category," Ms Ludford said.

"The Excellence Awards celebrate the achievements of individuals and teams for their pursuit of excellence and commitment to improving the lives of others."

Awards will focus on achievements that reflect the MLHD vision and priority areas. The focus is on wellness and seizing every opportunity to work in partnership with consumers to build and maintain wellness. The objective is to enable MLHD to be the best place to work, lead, practise, volunteer, teach, learn and grow.

Winners will be announced at a gala presentation evening on Friday 16 June 2023.

TEAM AWARD CATEGORIES

Enriching Consumer Experience

- Day Only Total Hip Replacement Program
- Emergency to Community Initiative
- Establishing Mobile BreastScreen Assessment Services

Value Based Healthcare

- Emergency to Community Initiative
- Establishing Mobile BreastScreen Assessment Services
- Teleburns: Collaborating for better patient outcomes (Wagga Wagga)

Exceptional Aboriginal Healthcare

- Gimhiimaldhanny Aboriginal Leadership program
- Aboriginal Health Engagement Project (Griffith)
- Murrumbidgee Out of Home Care (OOHC) Pathway

Patient Safety First

- Community MHDA Clinical Pharmacy Project
- Suicide Prevention Outreach Team: SPOT
- Waterline Maintenance and Testing Regime: Reducing Biofilm: Dental Unit

Innovation and Health Research

- Magseed
- Virtual Nurse Assist

Keeping People Healthy

- Empowering older people
- Lockhart LHAC keeping people healthy
- Saving sight is our vision!

Digital Innovation

- Establishing Mobile BreastScreen Assessment Services
- Rural Medical Consultation Service
- Tele Burns, Enhancing the Consumer Experience (Griffith)

Enhancing People & Culture

- Emerging Leaders (Griffith & Western Sector)
- Inclusion and Belonging Working Group
- School Based Traineeship Program

Sustainability & Environment

- Snowy Valleys Nature Wellness Drive
- Virtual physiotherapy service
- Women's Health Nurse-led MTOP (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) Service

INDIVIDUAL AWARD CATEGORIES

Allied Health staff member of the Year

- Alicia Madden, Leisure and Lifestyle Officer Murrumburrah Harden MPS
- Brianna Chown, Allied Health Assistant Temora District Hospital
- Cassandra Morris, Social Worker Wagga Wagga Safe Haven

Nurse or Midwife of the Year

- Bianca Jones, Registered Nurse/Midwife Cootamundra Hospital
- Jane Turner, Facility Manager Gundagai MPS & Interim Facility Manager Tumut Hospital
- Janine Sutton, Hyperemesis Gravidarum Project Lead
- Rebecca Stimpson, Registered Midwife/Clinical Midwifery Educator, Temora District Hospital

Staff Member of the Year

- Joanne Casey, Enrolled Nurse, Holbrook MPS
- Kelly-Anne Marchioni, Renal Stream Manager
- Nigel Smith, MHDA Services Coordinator for Aboriginal Peoples (Deniliquin)
- Paige Frater, Nurse Unit Manager, Temora District Hospital

Volunteer of the Year

- Dot Livermore, Culcairn LHAC
- Judy Wettenhall, Holbrook LHAC (former Chair)
- Syd Dudley, Chair, Finley LHAC

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

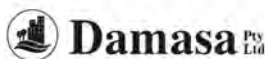
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eHealth NSW



A word from The Chair



Adrian Lindner
Acting Board Chair

SUSTAINABILITY

In line with the Commonwealth Environment Sustainability Plan and NSW Health strategies, the MLHD is committed to sustainable healthcare now and into the future through environmentally friendly practices. Our sustainability is fully backed by the Board. Back in May 2021 we made an Environmental Sustainability Statement of Commitment. This was followed by the launch of the MLHD Environmental Sustainability Plan in March 2022. It really is our corporate social responsibility to be good stewards of our resources and to reduce our carbon footprint.

The plan focusses on three key priorities and it's tremendous to see progress being made:

1. Be energy efficient

We have been installing heaps of solar panels on our buildings. Currently, Murrumbidgee Local Health District has the largest amount of photovoltaic installations across NSW Local Health Districts. That's exciting progress.

2. Change our behaviour

We are increasing our recycling and reducing material going to landfill. This even includes the theatre

recycling project, which has been a challenge in a traditional area where there can be significant waste.

3. Reduce water consumption

In 2021/22 we reduced water consumption by 14.5% compared to the previous year.

The NSW Health Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund provides funding to staff employed within local health districts. We submitted four projects;

- Pharmacy Blister Pack Recycling Project
- Marketing and promotional materials
- Recycling in the hospital environment
- The Mental Health Drug & Alcohol Consumer Garden Project – Let's Go Green. This was successful in securing funding. Well done. A great project that includes composting and the garden provides a positive mental health and wellbeing atmosphere for consumers.

Can I commend you to support our environmental initiatives. We can all contribute to reduce our impact on the Earth's scarce resources,

As Auntie Mary, one of our Board Directors once said to me; "the Aboriginal people had a zero-carbon footprint, they set the example".

I look forward to making much more progress with our Sustainability Plan.

YOUR BOARD

One of our Board Directors, Jonathan Green concludes his term on the Board on 30 June. I pay tribute to the work and wisdom Jonathan has brought to our Board and wish him well for his other endeavours.

Have you ever thought what the role of the Board is? We are actually individually appointed by the NSW Minister for Health. We are a skills-based Board, which means we come with a mixture of qualifications, professions and backgrounds, like a potpourri of knowledge. Hence, we bring a range of skills to the table with diverse perspectives. We also come from a wide distribution area around the District. Although we don't represent a geographical area, it is beneficial that we come from a range of large cities to small country towns, from the mountains to the plains, to reflect the diversity of our health delivery.

Our essential function is the governance oversight of MLHD. That starts with setting the strategic plan for MLHD (the current one is 2021 to 2026) then monitoring it during the life of the plan. Once a month we do a lot of reviewing the performance, patient safety and quality, plans, risks and resources of our organisation. These reviews include ensuring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are being met. A key document for us is the annual Service Agreement that we have signed with NSW Health to commit to deliver specific health services in the Murrumbidgee District. We also hold our Board meetings a number of times throughout the year at one of our small or outlying health facilities. It is a great opportunity for a walk around the facility to see it in operation, meet the staff, patients and residents.

Your Board is currently made up of the following members and their current and/or past roles and experiences are shown below.

- Adrian Lindner, Coolamon - accountant, agriculture, health manager, university executive
- Alam Yoosuff, Finley - GP/VMO, primary health director
- Andrew Jones, Young - finance and banking, risk management
- Cheryl Penrith, Wagga - Aboriginal community advocate
- Elke Cleverdon, Young - accountant, rural financial counsellor, agriculture director, risk management
- Glynis Ingram, Canberra ex Wagga - social welfare, senior government executive
- John Ireland, Wagga - lawyer, arbitrator and mediator to the Personal Injury Commission of N.S.W.
- Jonathan Green, Albury - lawyer, non-executive director
- Liz Dixon, Carathool - physiotherapist, patient quality and safety
- Mary Atkinson, Wagga - Aboriginal community advocate, education
- Tony Kolbe, Albury - public health manager, epidemiology



TOURING OUR FACILITIES

A highlight of my role as Chair is to see first-hand our health services in action, joining our Chief Executive Jill or one of her executive team members. In the last couple of months we have toured Hillston, Griffith, Leeton, Finley, Urana, Hay and Narrandera facilities. It is rewarding to spend time with the staff and patients, plus at some sites inspect recent or current redevelopments. Some of the sites have been identified for needing refurbishment or replacement and we have plans to do so, once we receive the all-important funding.

At each facility we meet up with our Local Health Advisory Committee (LHAC) representatives and discuss the initiatives and challenges they have. They are keen to assist us in promoting our services and dreaming up some wonderful initiatives to lift the health of our communities. It is

so beneficial to have these volunteer community representatives. We value their work and we have the most extensive network of LHACs of all the Districts in NSW.

We also meet with the local council mayor and managers to explore how councils can assist us in delivering health services, such as community transport for residents to travel to larger centres for medical specialist appointments or surgical procedures. A regular issue is the shortage of rental accommodation in our towns for new staff arriving. Hence, we are working with councils to provide accommodation in the town that new staff can use when they arrive.

Keep safe over winter with vaccinations for COVID and influenza,

Adrian Lindner
MLHD Acting Board Chair

Outstanding Experiences

Infinite Opportunities

When you join the team at Murrumbidgee Local Health District, you unlock priority access to a broad range of interesting and unique medical cases where you can quickly advance your practical skills.

With this advanced skill acquisition and experience comes fast-tracked career progression; the sky's the limit to how far you can go!

Award-winning healthcare for you and your patients

Join us in Australia's magical Murrumbidgee, where you'll be a key part of delivering world-leading government-subsidised healthcare. Enjoy free hospital care and subsidised healthcare in one of the best healthcare systems in the world.

Everything you deserve.

We treasure your skills and experience and we're ready to roll out the red carpet to welcome you to town. Speak to us about all the goodies we've prepared especially for you, including relocation bonuses.

Join the A-Team.

Go on, you've earned it: a promotion, a world-class workplace, inspiring colleagues, award-winning staff and patient programs - all wrapped up in a rich tapestry of Australian cultural treasures.


Safety First.

As a healthcare expert, you know the importance of safety in work and in life. Our little slice of paradise is one of the safest in the world: extremely low crime, stable economy, and a beautiful, safe natural environment, perfect for raising a family.

Make the move.

To help you make the move to our little slice of heaven, we'll help cover your relocation and travel expenses, help you find housing and get settled, and help in other handy ways - just let us know what you need!

visit: www.mlhd.health.gov.au/careers



when was the last time
you saw someone
squashed
by a cow?

Outstanding Experiences.

Infinite Opportunities.

MURRUMBIDGEE
Local Health District



NEW APPOINTMENTS

Murrumbidgee Local Health District is delighted to announce the appointments of four new senior staff members. Chief Executive Jill Ludford said all four health professionals have extensive experience and their appointments will continue to benefit the local communities across the district.



CARLA BAILEY
Executive Director Operations

Carla took up her new position in January 2023, and manages the strategic and operational delivery of healthcare services within MLHD and has responsibility across all hospitals as well as a range of other clinical and corporate services.

The role is more strategic and includes the planning, development and oversight of strategic and business plans, service improvement and innovation, business and clinical service strategies and relationship management.

Carla is an innovative and strategic leader and we are pleased she can continue to apply her breadth of skills and experience in this new role.

"I am looking forward to continuing to work with staff and community across MLHD to ensure the delivery of quality healthcare to our communities," Carla said.



PROFESSOR LENERT BRUCE
General Manager, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

Len is a familiar face to many through his role as interim General Manager, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and Executive Director of Medical Services.

Len brings a wealth of experience and knowledge which will allow him to continue to lead the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital Executive team.

He joined MLHD as an anaesthetist in 2007, having worked in South Africa and the United Kingdom previously, and was appointed as the Executive Director of Medical Services in 2020.

Len will also continue as the Executive Director Medical Services for MLHD.

He began in the General Manager role on Monday 17 April 2023.

"I have enjoyed my role as interim General Manager of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and am looking forward to continuing my role into the future," Len said.

TEGAN REID

General Manager, Rural Operations

Tegan will be a familiar face to many at the MLHD through her former role as District Allied Health Manager and, more recently, Acting Director of Clinical Operations – Sector West.

She has developed strong relationships with key stakeholders during her interim coverage of the Director Clinical Operations – Sector West position and brings a wealth of knowledge.

Tegan is an experienced manager and leader having worked across various health roles and is passionate about community engagement and integrated service models.

This new position, based at the Wagga Wagga District Office will oversee all six MLHD Clusters in addition to the renal and cancer streams and the District’s Multipurpose Services’ aged care portfolio.

“I am looking forward to working with staff across the MLHD to provide quality care to our patients,” Tegan said.



**DR BARBARA TAYLOR
RESEARCH DIRECTOR**

Barbara who was previously MLHD’s Research Manager, has extensive experience in periodontal clinical specialist practice, research and training.

She has run clinical trials into links between dental disease and general health and also collaborated with researchers throughout the world and served on Human Research Ethics Committees for more than a decade. Barbara said she is looking forward to building on her work in recent years as Research Manager at MLHD.

“We’ve been working on new developments and partnerships that will further strengthen research activity and help to improve health in MLHD,” Barbara said.

“A key focus will be improving access to healthcare for people in rural and regional communities so they can receive care closer to home.”

ALISON NIKITAS

**Director Public Health, Murrumbidgee & Southern NSW
Local Health Districts**

Alison brings extensive experience in public health to her role. Most recently, Alison has been the public face of MLHD’s campaigns to raise awareness of mosquito-borne viruses.

“I am keen to continue working with the Public Health Unit, and MLHD staff more broadly, to help safeguard the health of our community,” she said.





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“ I hope to see all school playgrounds in the future offering protected and shaded green space for their students to grow and be active in. ”

SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS BEAT THE HEAT IN HILLTOPS

Outdoor learning and recreation spaces in three Hilltops schools have received some special attention as part of the Live Life Well @ School initiative.

Live Life Well @ School is a joint initiative of the NSW Ministry of Health and NSW Department of Education that aims to get more students, more active, more often.

The six-month long project saw Boorowa Central School, Wombat Public School and Barmedman Public School partner with the Murrumbidgee Local Health District to create more welcoming, shaded, biodiverse, and productive playgrounds in which students can enjoy and learn from, now and in the future.

The project began when Murrumbidgee Local Health District's Health Promotion Officer, Barb Manwaring approached several local schools to discuss how best to increase the opportunity for physical activity in outdoor school settings, in a rapidly changing climate and with increasing temperatures.

The initial goal was to increase shaded and protected areas for students, so a number of advanced shade trees for each of the schools were planted in exposed areas of each playground.

Fruit trees were also planted in each school, with the goal for both students and the community to use produce from the garden. The fruit trees include a variety of apples, cherries, blood oranges, apricots and plums.

Principal of Wombat Public School, Ms Renae Fairey said the trees are a very welcome addition to the playground.

"A shaded and protected area for the students to be physically active is becoming more necessary in our summers, and the fruit trees will provide a great future resource for our kitchen garden and the community in general," Ms Fairey said.

Another aim of the Live Life Well @ School initiative is to foster partnership opportunities within the communities to support the school's strategies.

At Boorowa Central School relationships have developed with Boorowa Landcare Group, Tilt Renewables, Bunnings Young



and Cancer Council NSW resulting in an extension of the project – the creation of two protected biodiversity corridors on the school grounds to attract pollinators and wildlife to the playground and to provide shelter and educational opportunities for students.

The project at Boorowa Central School culminated in an interactive tree planting and educational afternoon for all the students of the school. The corridors were planted by both infants, primary and high school students, and at the conclusion of the project Boorowa Landcare Group gifted each student and teacher of the school a shrub to take home and plant.

Boorowa Central School Principal, Mr Graham Jones said the school community is very pleased with the outcome and success of the project.

"The spaces already feel different with the additional trees, and they will only continue to become more inviting as the trees continue to establish themselves. The Healthy Playgrounds Project has developed some great partnerships and has certainly improved our playground for the future," Mr Jones said.

Barb Manwaring, Health Promotion Officer with Murrumbidgee Local Health District, found the project very rewarding, particularly seeing the local partnerships grow and develop.



"I hope to see all school playgrounds in the future offering protected and shaded green space for their students to grow and be active in," Ms Manwaring said.

"The next generation has such an important role in lessening the impact of climate change, and engendering an appreciation of trees and biodiversity is the first step." ■

HAYDEN'S

LEMON SPONGE REIGNS SUPREME



LEMON SPONGE CAKE RECIPE

Winner of the Cancer Council's Australia's Biggest Morning Tea competition at Wagga Wagga District Office, Hayden Minchin shares his special Lemon Sponge Cake recipe which took out first prize.

Our goal was to raise at least \$200 for cancer research which we far exceeded with a final total of \$550!!

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup (105g) cornflour
- 1 tbs custard powder
- 1 tsp cream of tartar
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 4 eggs, separated
- ¾ cup (165g) caster sugar
- Whipped cream, to serve

LEMON FILLING

- ½ cup (75g) caster sugar
- ¼ cup (35g) cornflour
- 1 egg yolk
- ¼ cup (60ml) lemon juice, plus 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- 20g unsalted butter

LEMON ICING

- 1 cup (120g) icing sugar
- Juice of ½ a lemon and extra pared lemon zest to serve

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180°C and grease two 20cm cake pans.
2. Sieve cornflour, custard powder, cream of tartar and bicarb into a bowl. Set aside.
3. Place egg whites and a pinch of salt in a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment and whisk until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar, 1 tbs at a time, and whisk for 10 minutes or until sugar is dissolved. Add egg yolks, 1 at a time, whisking constantly, until combined.



4. Using a spatula, gently fold in cornflour mixture. Divide batter evenly between prepared pans, smoothing tops with spatula. Lightly tap pans on a benchtop to release any air bubbles.

5. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Cool in pans for 10 minutes, then remove and transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

6. Meanwhile, for the lemon filling, place ¾ cup (180ml) water, sugar, cornflour, a pinch of salt, egg yolk and lemon juice in bowl and whisk to combine. Pour into a medium saucepan over medium-low heat and cook, stirring constantly, for 4-5 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat and stir in lemon zest and butter. Set aside to cool completely.

7. For the lemon icing, in a bowl, combine icing sugar with enough lemon juice to make a soft icing.

8. To assemble, place 1 cake on a serving plate, spread with lemon filling and cream, and top with remaining cake. Drizzle lemon icing over top, allowing some to drip down sides, and sprinkle with pared zest.

Crucial Program changing lives of regional patients

About IPTAAS

IPTAAS is the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. This is a NSW Government scheme providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs when a patient needs to travel long distances for treatment that is not available locally.

What travel costs can I claim?

IPTAAS will reimburse you for travel costs associated with your treatment, including air travel if you need to fly for medical reasons.

Before you fly, you must ask your referring doctor or treating practitioner to get an air approval code. This code is recorded on your application and will ensure that you receive the full cost (excluding GST) back for your flights.

If you choose to fly and do not have an air approval code, IPTAAS will either reimburse you at the same rate as private car travel (for the distance between your home and the treatment address) or the cost of the flight (excluding GST) - whichever is the lesser amount.

What type of treatment can I claim travel and accommodation assistance for?

IPTAAS will provide travel and accommodation assistance for eligible patients who need to travel long distances for specialist medical treatment, to a highly specialised Allied Health Clinic, or to an approved Prosthetist/Orthotist.

To be eligible for financial assistance through IPTAAS, you must be receiving treatment:

- from an approved specialist medical practitioner
- at one of the approved Allied Health Clinics, or from an approved Prosthetist/Orthotist, as defined by IPTAAS.

For appointments and treatment from 1 August 2022, patients attending the below are also eligible for financial assistance through IPTAAS:

- High risk foot services
- Non-commercial clinical trials
- Highly specialised oral health clinics in NSW
- Ocularists

Assessment guidelines provide detailed information about patient and health service eligibility.

What subsidies have increased and how is eligibility expanding?

New financial assistance rates and expanded eligibility now apply for travel and accommodation appointments and treatment after 1 August 2022.

Accommodation assistance will be paid at a rate of:

- \$40 per night if you are staying with family or friends (Airbnb will be paid at this rate)
- \$75 per night if you are staying in not-for-profit or commercial accommodation for the first seven nights and \$120 per night from day eight onwards.

The private vehicle subsidy rate increases to 40c per kilometre.

Patients attending high-risk foot clinics, non-commercial clinical trials, highly specialised publicly funded oral health clinics in NSW and ocularists are now eligible to claim.

Financial assistance remains the same for:

- the full cost (including booking fees) of public transport is reimbursed less the GST
- the full economy cost less GST is reimbursed for approved air travel.
- taxi subsidy that is based on length of appointments/treatment.

Am I eligible to apply for assistance from IPTAAS?

To be eligible for financial assistance from IPTAAS, you must:

- be a resident of NSW or Lord Howe Island
- be enrolled with Medicare
- not be receiving, or eligible for, financial assistance for travel and accommodation from third party insurance or other Australian government services
- be referred for treatment at your nearest health service
- receive treatment at an approved health service
- travel from your residence for treatment at least 100km (one way), or at least 200kms in a week by making multiple trips to and from treatment.

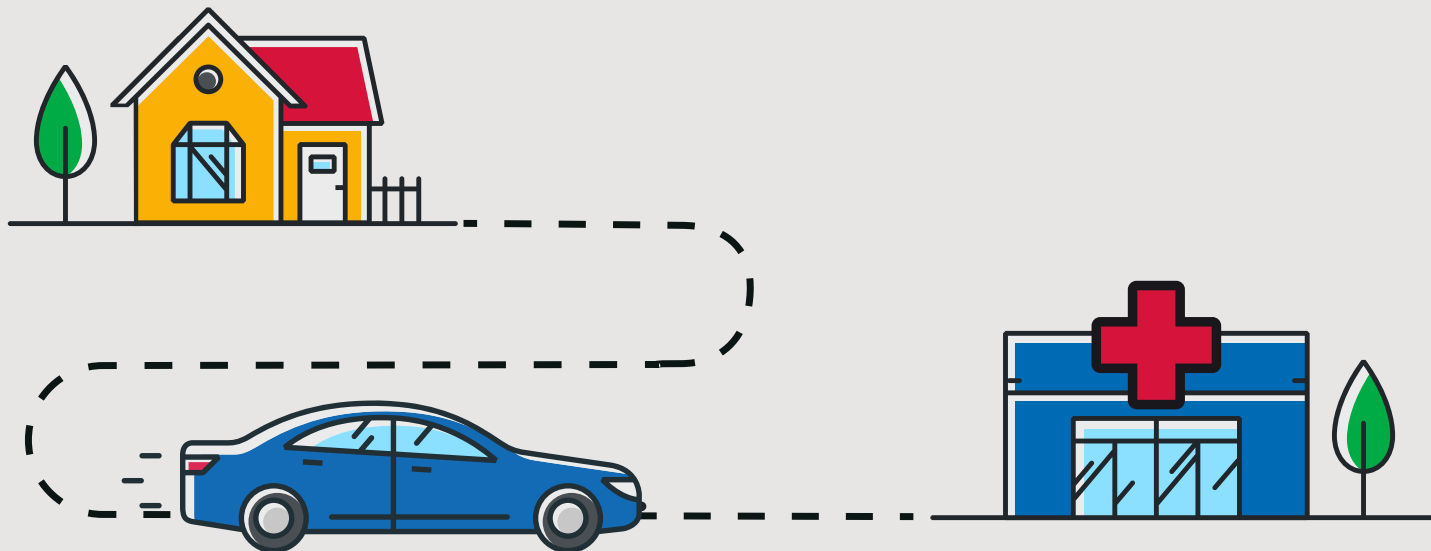
To find out more visit:

iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au

Do you travel long distances for specialised healthcare?



If you travel more than 100km one way or 200km within a week you may be able to claim financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs.



To find out if you are eligible



Ask

your social worker
or healthcare team



Call

1800 478 227

or



Visit

iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au



Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme - IPTAAS

Scan the QR code to learn more.



*Kerry Geale, supported by his wife Robyn in the Mary Potter palliative care ward at Calvary Riverina Hospital, is being treated for prostate cancer.
Picture by Les Smith*

Matters of Life and Death

Reproduced with permission of the Daily Advertiser, Wagga Wagga

Kerry Geale knows a thing or two about life and death.

The former Wagga Citizen of the Year, parks and recreation manager, city councillor, nurseryman, gardening talkback host, and men's health advocate also knows "a darn sight more" than he used to about palliative care.

Diagnosed with prostate cancer 14 years ago, Kerry has been receiving palliative care for a while now, sometimes at home and sometimes in hospital.

He knows many people diagnosed with a terminal illness live for years after starting palliative care: that it doesn't necessarily mean 'the end' but is often a beginning that can help people live the best life they can for the time they may have left.

Kerry likens his periods of palliative care in hospital to working on a battery, "but it's you who's getting yourself sorted and recharged".

He's pretty sure he's lived as long as he has because of it. He believes it is important to talk about dying with family, including children.

He thinks the collaborative care delivered by public and private providers in the Riverina is brilliant, whether it's in the home or a hospital.

Kerry knows that he is now coming toward the end of his life.

"For a few years I was fine, and in my mind I still am, but limited physically," Kerry said.

"It's crazy to think I'm going to be dead soon."

Speaking from his bed on the Mary Potter palliative care ward at Calvary Riverina Hospital on the eve of Palliative Care Week, Kerry bravely shared some of his story, and some of his own misconceptions.

"When I first started palliative care at the hospital it scared me. I didn't understand it, I just thought you go in there to die. That's the general perception. I had the thought that I wasn't coming back out. I really had no idea about things," he said.

"I've been in and out of hospital over the last few years for treatment or tests, or to adjust pain medication.

"Being in palliative care actually allows you to live as best as you can with escalating symptoms, and to understand the systems. It helps you live as well as you can for the time you have- or longer."

"I went overseas a couple of times. It was hard but I still did it. I just took the attitude that 'why should I sit at home and not do the things I want to do- life is for living and I'm not going to waste it'."

Kerry is no stranger to cancer or death.

The youngest of identical triplets, Kerry saw his two older brothers, Barry and Wayne, die from bowel and prostate cancer respectively.

Over the years he has gone through numerous operations, procedures and treatment to try to beat his hated cancer, alas to no avail.

Several years ago, he saw firsthand the care that was wrapped around his daughter Tracey, a mother of three, before she passed away from breast cancer.

"Tracey was here in Calvary and she wanted to go home for Christmas," Kerry recalled, choking back the tears that always come.

"While Calvary couldn't provide the at-home service in this case, the Wagga Base Hospital could, and its community nurses could support Tracey at home.

"Calvary and the Base Hospital and the community nurses worked really well together. Still do. The collaboration is at a really high level. It works really well. From what I can see, it's quite brilliant.

"And no, the palliative care unit here at Calvary isn't only for private patients. You've got the whole gamut of public and private patients here."

Kerry's latest stay in hospital has been about seven weeks.

"I wasn't expecting to stay that long but I had to sort out

VALE

Murrumbidgee Local Health District acknowledges the passing of Kerry Geale and pass on our deepest sympathies to his family, our management and staff. Kerry was a passionate advocate for Mens Health and former Chair of the Wagga Wagga Local Health Advisory Committee. He will be missed.

medication, see specialists, get my body sorted out and have some treatment," he said.

"This has been the best place for it this time- they can get their doctor teams together and they can sort out what to do next.

"Everything is here. I've had great doctors and great care."

For now, Kerry's aim is to head home to spend some quality time with Robyn, his wife of nearly 50 years, his children and his grandchildren, with whom he will no doubt continue his frank and fearless conversations.

"If you had told me that I could talk to my grandkids about dying I would have said you're crazy," he said.

"But we've had some fascinating conversations. They just joined in, they didn't shy away from the conversations. I'm very proud of them.

"It's scary and hard sometimes, but I think it is so important to have these conversations.

"The more you talk about it the better for everyone." ■

National Palliative Care Week (May 21 to May 27) aims to put 'Matters of Life and Death' front and centre in Australia's consciousness.

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MEET OUR PEOPLE



Appreciating a country life

Dr Anismis Bakini, Junior Medical Officer (JMO) is delighted he will be completing his internship and residency at Wagga Base Hospital over the next two years, providing quality healthcare to the people living in our regional community.

"I first trained here in 2021 as part of my placement and I love Wagga. It is really laid-back compared to Sydney. The people here genuinely want to have a chat to you. They take the time to say g'day and I appreciate that.

"When I lived in Sydney, I had no time to play sports and do other activities. Time just was eroded by simple things like trying to make your way around the city.

"Living in the country means life is less hectic, getting around takes minutes not hours, and people seem happier," Anismis said.

"I am wanting to stay here as long as I can, and then perhaps specialise in Surgical. That will require me to go back to the city for a while, but I have plans to return to the country and set up practice.

"Wagga Base has a comprehensive support network for training doctors, and the team provides a great network of people. It is a privilege to be around them."

Born in Sudan, Anismis reflects that he witnessed many people suffering from preventable illnesses, many of which were easily treatable.

"The lack of available healthcare and doctors to treat these conditions motivated me as a young boy pursue a career in health," Anismis said.

"Australia has given me the opportunity to follow that dream, and one day I hope to go back and help the people in Sudan.

"I feel lucky that I have two homes, and I hope to be able to make a real difference to rural communities both in Australia and in Sudan.

"When my family and I first moved to Australia in 2005 we settled in Cowra, so I grew up in the countryside with room to run about, play sport and enjoy family time with my five siblings, I just loved it.

"My parents were such positive role models in my life. They showed me the type of person I want to be. My father was a Pastor and growing up he gave so much to others, even though he did not have many possessions himself.

"My parents taught me the value of compassion and altruism, and that is how I want to be.

"I feel like that is my mission in life, to help others. My career has only just started, and I am looking forward to see the difference I can make in regional communities over the next few years." ■

Michael Sherwin Registered Nurse Deniliquin Hospital

A fourth generation nurse, Michael Sherwin comes from a long line of health professionals.

His great grandmother nursed in the First World War, his grandmother a nurse in the Second World War, and his mother a nurse, all the while raising her family as a single parent.

"I grew up in the Northern Rivers, hearing the stories about the good work of my grandmothers and my mother and felt like nurses should be treated with reverence and respect," Michael said.

"They taught me to treat others how you want to be treated, and I wanted to emulate their compassion and kindness.

After finishing year 12 he became a personal care worker and then trained to be an assistant in nursing before enrolling nursing at Royal Prince Alfred in Sydney.

"I was lucky to be able to be a first aid officer in at the Sydney Olympics and worked across a variety of fields including orthopaedics.

"It was a natural progression to nursing, and the more I worked in health, the more I loved it and the more I wanted to learn.

"I hoped to increase my skills and qualifications to become a registered nurse, but as a single parent I did not quite have the time to commit to that level of study. Then life got busy, and you tend to not prioritise yourself and your aspirations," Michael said.

At the age of 48, Michael felt compelled to complete his Registered Nursing (RN) Degree to allow him to redefine his professional development and critical thinking.

"The practical work as an enrolled nurse, compared to a registered nurse is not that different. You still are focused on caring for your patients, as you would a family member, the care and empathy you have for you patients is the same. But I was ready to be more involved and accountable for the problem solving and clinical care aspects of the role.

"I was often hearing great feedback from



my managers at work, encouraging me to complete my nursing degree, but it was my partner John, who gave me the encouragement and support to make it happen. He has been the backbone of my journey to get here. He took care of everything so I could upskill and focus on my transition to registered nursing.

"John was raised in Deni and his family lived there, so when he first brought me to visit back in 2012, I fell in love with the town.

"I had by then travelled the world, and seen many things, but when I first arrived here it felt like that place where you find the comfort in taking your shoes off and walking on the soft grass. It felt like I was home.

"Over the years we kept visiting and I felt a profound attachment to the community there, the people are so friendly and accepting and they all pull together in a crisis, regardless of who you are and where you come from," Michael tells us.

"As an AIN, EN and graduate RN, I have worked across a few metropolitan and regional settings including Wagga Base, Tumut and Deniliquin. I have found the culture at Murrumbidgee Local Health District to be extremely supportive and friendly.

Last year, Michael completed his registered nursing degree and was delighted to successfully apply for his graduate placement at Deniliquin hospital.

"It has worked out well because we have family in Deniliquin and the community is amazing. Everyone embraces self-

growth, professional development, and acceptance.

"We do things a little differently in Deni, and I feel very blessed to be given the opportunity to live and work in such a progressive and passionate community.

"I feel proud to put on my nursing uniform each day and go to work giving the very best of myself, to be accountable and to roll up my sleeves and make a real difference as a health care worker for the people in this regional town," Michael said.

"Every day I am learning, I am asking more questions and pushing myself further. I have higher expectations of my capabilities and more confidence in myself as a nurse now.

"Deniliquin Hospital is a great place to learn, everything is at your hands here, and you will be able to take your skills and experience anywhere that life takes you," Michael said.

"As for me, I am not going anywhere, my life and experience have brought me Deni, where the grass really is greener, and it just feels like home." ■



Local GPs share some of the fun of their rural careers & lives

Good news for rural General Practice with Gundagai visit

An eager group of medical students and junior doctors especially interested in rural life and rural medicine headed to Gundagai in the middle of March to participate in the third annual Rural Generalist Workshop and Showcase.

The Riverina Regional Training Hub, part of the University of Notre Dame Australia's Rural Clinical School, hosted medical students and junior doctors for this Workshop and Showcase weekend. The workshop participants came from around NSW, the ACT and Victoria from various medical schools and hospitals, to check out firsthand the joys of living and working in a rural location.

Day one saw them head to Brungle as the guests of the Brungle Health and Community Centre particularly local Aboriginal community Elders. The Elders generously shared stories to help these doctors in training, to think about culture and its importance in providing good health care.

Saturday afternoon local SES volunteers tested the trainees' mettle and shared their own emergency

response knowledge in a simulated mass casualty event. A quick visit to the Gundagai local hospital was a wonderful chance to see the quality of this rural facility and the care delivered by the team there.

Part of appreciating living rurally includes the opportunity to savour local produce and cooking. The iconic and prize winning local Niagara Café provided just this experience for participants who also had the chance to meet local general practitioners and other community members during the evening.

On Sunday morning, local general practitioners shared their stories of working and living in a rural community and the training pathways they followed. Once the workshop wrapped up, the participants headed off to continue their journeys to provide health care rurally and regionally with a greater understanding of the joys and challenges of rural medicine and the wonderful opportunities waiting for them.

Professor Michael Brydon, Associate Dean of the Notre Dame, Rural Clinical School summed up the weekend:

"Thanks so much to the local Gundagai community, The Brungle Health and Community Centre, SES volunteers, the wonderful local General Practitioners and so many others for demonstrating first-hand how personally and professionally satisfying a career in rural medicine can be. It's events like these that can make such a difference in helping young doctors to explore the privilege it is to be part of such a welcoming and warm community."

Participants from previous workshops have elected to do their hospital training in the region and to commit to rural general practice and other speciality training and careers. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

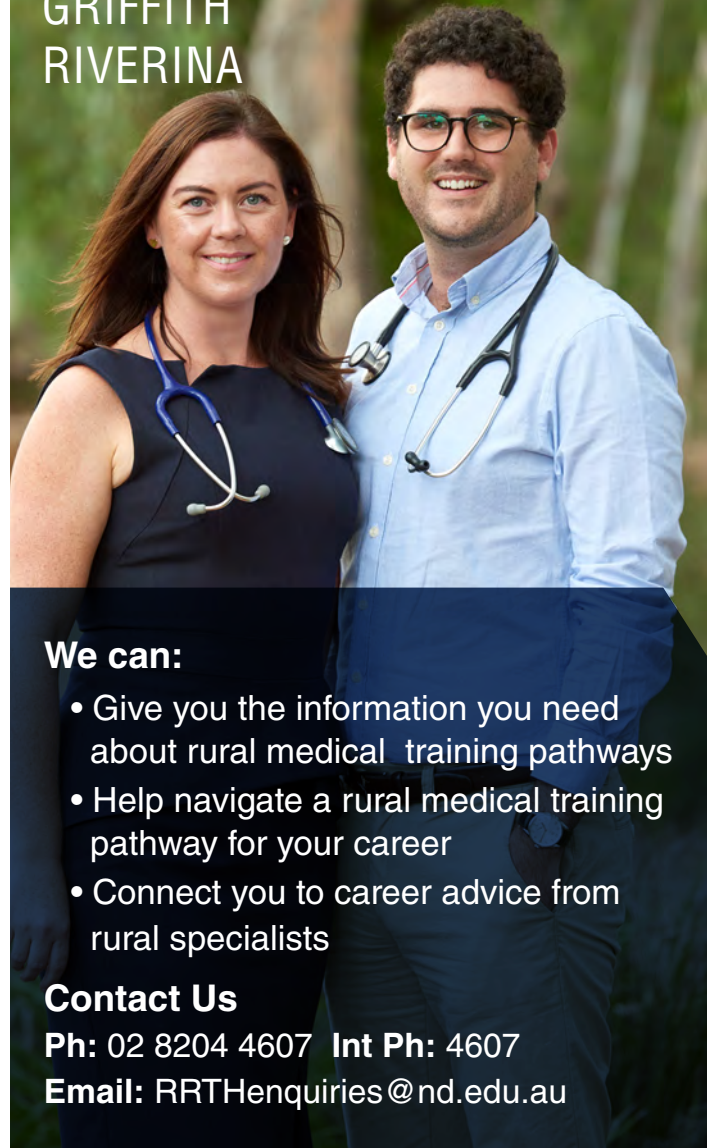
Fran Trench
Executive Officer & Training Support
Riverina Regional Training Hub | Rural Clinical School
School of Medicine | University of Notre Dame Australia
40 Hardy Ave
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

M: 0413893974
E: Fran.Trench@nd.edu.au

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Photos (Top): Gundagai SES opens up for med students & trainee doctors

Elders from the Brungle community share their stories

Imaging Associates now offering e-Referrals

Imaging Associates has recently launched an e-Referral service*, offering medical healthcare professionals in the local Riverina community a more convenient and secure way to send referrals directly to their Wagga Clinic. This digital solution simplifies the booking process, ensuring patients are promptly scheduled for the appropriate study and receive timely care.

With e-Referrals, healthcare professionals can effortlessly send referrals from their Practice Management Software to Imaging Associates. Upon sending an e-Referral, patients receive an instant SMS notification to advise them that their referral has been received. Imaging Associates' booking team will contact patients to schedule their appointments, providing detailed preparation instructions, an accurate quotation and will address any questions or concerns they may have.

The advantages of e-Referrals extend beyond convenience. Referring clinicians can have increased confidence that their patient will be booked for the correct study in a timely matter. As with any referral to Imaging Associates, clinicians will receive the patient's report directly into their Practice Management Software, facilitating seamless communication and continuity of care.

Complementing this service is 'IA X-RAYS', Imaging Associates' secure online image platform that grants patients access to their radiology images via their mobile device. By using the 'IA X-RAYS' application, patients can conveniently share their images with all those involved in their care, eliminating the need for physical films, CDs, or USBs.

Imaging Associates remains committed to delivering modern, high-quality services to their referring practitioners and patients, ensuring a seamless radiology process from start to finish. The introduction of e-Referrals streamlines the booking procedure, ensuring patients receive timely care. By adopting technological advancements, Imaging Associates continues to elevate healthcare standards in the local community.

*Imaging Associates e-Referral service is currently available for private medical practices.

Should you wish to have e-Referrals set up for your practice, please contact Michael Small at msmall@imagingassociates.net.au



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Besides learning in and contributing to medical care in a regional setting, students also undertake placements in surrounding smaller centres to develop skills and understanding of local health needs of more rural and remote communities.

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